APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/429,758	10/28/1999	NORMAN ADAMS	ARIB-P0110-U	6287

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EXAMINER
ZURITA, JAMES H

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3625	

DATE MAILED: 07/02/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

PTO-90C (Rev. 07-01)

Application No.	Applicant(s)
09/429,758	ADAMS ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit
James Zurita	3625

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE _3_ MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _16 April 2003_ .

2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.

3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) ☒ Claim(s) _1-50_ is/are pending in the application.

    4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) ☒ Claim(s) _1-50_ is/are rejected.

7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a)☐ approved b)☐ disapproved by the Examiner.

    If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

    a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

      1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

      2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____ .

      3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).

    a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _18_ .
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: .

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set

forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this

application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set

forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action

has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 16 April

2003 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Applicants' amendment of 16 April amended claims 1, 12, 14, 22, 30, 35, 36, 40-

42, 44 and 46. Claims 1-50 are pending and will be examined.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 16 April 2003 have been fully considered but they are

not persuasive.

In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain

features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies

(i.e., "providing a user with a number of questions... such as 'what do you want to buy

today?", "...number of answers to choose from...", "...emphasis is on browsing and

selecting rather than typing, thus channeling the user toward standard answers for

generating error-free requisitions...") are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although

the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification

are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

Applicants argue that the references do not teach "...via a user interface, wherein the user is to reply to the query by selecting one or more requisition information selections from a user interface..." To access files and access system commands, users often use interfaces. An interface is software that enables a program to work with the user (the user interface, which can be a command-line interface, menu-drive interface, or a graphical user interface), with another program such as the operating system, or with a computer's hardware.[1] King's users interact with files and other system resources. King discloses that users may browse and select items to be purchased. See, for example, Col. 1, lines 12-40.

In response to applicant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found *either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art.* See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In this case, it is well known to one of ordinary skill that users need a user interface to interact with computers.

One of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made would have known to combine King, Lemble and Gardner and knowledge concerning interfaces to

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[1] Definition of interface, MICROSOFT Computer Dictionary.

permit users of computers to access data from computers. One of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made would have been motivated to combine King, Lemble and Gardner and knowledge concerning interfaces to permit users of computers to access data from computers for the obvious reason that users prefer easy-to-use commands, menu selections and graphical interfaces for interacting with computers. Without such interfaces and extensions, users may feel overwhelmed or frustrated by having to enter obscure, non-intuitive operating system commands. Users who are unable to remember operating system commands may well avoid carrying on electronic commerce over the Internet, for example. On the other hand, well-designed, intuitive interfaces permit users to feel comfortable in performing complex operations such as moving files or sending emails to acknowledge receipt of goods and services and operating resources. This creates a general feeling of satisfaction, delight and well-being and permits users wide use of computers and electronic procurement systems. Companies that create user-friendly interfaces find their software and products in great demand, thereby increasing their sales and profits.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims 1-50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over King et al. (US Patent 5,319,542) in view of Gardner (US Patent 5,758,327) and further in view of Lemble (US Patent 5,315,504).

As a preliminary matter, the Examiner notes that applicants' term "electronic receipt" does not appear in the disclosures. Applicants use the term "desktop receipt" to describe how users may acknowledge that they have received the goods they requested. The terms "electronic receipt" and "desktop receipt" will be given their broadest reasonable interpretation to include any electronic form used to acknowledge that goods and services have been received.

King discloses a system that generates purchase requisition records (Col. 2, lines 20-67). The purchase request may be generated according to combination of input from a requestor and information concerning an item being purchased stored in a database (see at least Col. 4, line 47-Col. 5, line 30). King determines approval path for purchase requisition according to approval rules (Col. 6, lines 1-30). King provides an entire process, from preparing catalogs to receipt of orders. On a computer system such as King's, receipts are often called electronic receipts.

King, Gardner and Lemble *do not* use the term "electronic receipt" or "desktop receipt". It was well known to one of ordinary skill that users often acknowledge that they have received goods or services at various points in a requisition process by notifying appropriate persons. While the notifications may be in paper form, on a computer system it may be more convenient to issue the notification in electronic format, perhaps via email, fax. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to include electronic "receipts" or "desktop receipts." One of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made would have been motivated to

include electronic "receipts" or "desktop receipts" for the obvious reason that in

accounting, such receipts are a common, ordinary item in everyday business.

In financial accounting, such notices are valuable, for example, in auditing a

company's books by accountants. In managerial accounting, such notices and

acknowledgments are important to let managers evaluate their requisition process. By

using well-known checks and balances, managers may prevent theft, embezzlement or

payments for non-existent goods that would otherwise be noted as assets on their

balance sheets. Receipts, including electronic receipts, permit companies to supervise

the various actors in a requisition process.

King discloses generating a requisition, communicating an order to a supplier as

a purchase order. Since it's usually important to known where to send a purchase order

and who to pay, supplier indicator information may include one or more of the following:

a supplier name, postal address, fax number, email address, electronic address, etc.

See at least Col. 2, lines 12-64. King discloses creating a supplier profile (see at least

Col. 4, lines 47-67). Such profiles are necessarily based on supplier information, and

the information is often stored in an enterprise's systems. It is well-known in the art that

companies often have lists of preferred suppliers. Thus, a requisition and purchase

order system often includes programs and protocols to access data on an ERP system.

As King discloses, approver-specific information is often referred to as personal

profiles, in accordance with company specifications. Approval authorities may be

changed by administrators or other approvers. Since requisitions are internal to a

company, it is common practice to assign a requisition a unique identifier according to a

company's accounting system. In addition, it is logical to specify where purchased

products are to be sent. Such instructions may be stored in a database (as in King).

Alternatively, authorizations may be input by an approver or requestor, since they

usually know why a product is being requested, where the product should be delivered

and other details. It is well-known to allow users to update selected profile information.

For example, companies often move a person from one office to another, or from one

department to another. Company factories may be relocated or created in different

geographical locations. In addition, persons may be promoted and assigned new

responsibilities. Persons may also leave a company's employment voluntarily. People

may be laid-off, demoted or even fired. It is common practice to prevent access to a

system by former employees, and to reassign a person's tasks and responsibilities.

Responsibilities may also be time-limited. For example, a person may leave on

vacation, maternity leave, or a person may be hospitalized indefinitely. Other well-

known ways of guiding approvals include amount-limits, time limits, etc.

While King *does not* specifically disclose how to handle a requisition when an

approver has not responded based on a specified time span, limitations by hold time are

well known in the art. For example, with Just In Time/JIT inventory systems, time is

critical in requisitioning and ordering of products. With JIT, companies attempt to limit

the costs associated with storing inventory that is necessary to carry out business. It is

obvious that in such systems, it would be dangerous to allow a requisition request to be

held up by any approver for longer than specified periods of time. It is obvious to

provide alternate approval paths to avoid delays such as when an approver may not be

able to approve/deny a requisition within specified time periods. In addition, should

there be unexpected jumps or drops in demand for a company's product, it may be

equally critical to change hold time parameters accordingly, particularly if the item being

ordered is part of a critical path.

King discloses retrieving data from legacy databases (see at least Col. 6, lines

31-62 concerning databases on mainframe systems). Database records inherently

include fields. Communication among nodes on a network as described by King

inherently take place with programs on sending and receiving ends. These programs

and protocols are often referred to as "adaptors." As applicants admit (see at least

disclosures, page 43, lines 1-10), well-known adaptors include the Lightweight Directory

Access Protocol/LDAP. Adaptors are often identified by names of systems to which

they connect. An adaptor connecting a system to an enterprise's Human Resource

Management/HRM system, for example, might be referred to as a human resource

management system adaptor. As applicants admit, HRM systems and adaptors are

well known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

King discloses interactions with various databases, including catalog

maintenance and updates (see at least Col. 3, line 60-Col. 5, line 28). While King *does*

not specify frequency of interaction with a legacy database, it is obvious that such

interactions occur and they may take place on a periodic basis. Inventory needs may

vary over time, for example. Orders may include standing orders, also referred to as

recurring orders, frequent orders, etc. A supplier's products and their availability may

change over periods of time. A supplier might obtain patents on new inventions and

may provide products and services that were not previously available. See also king's

references to various interfaces (Col. 6, lines 47-58).

King discloses transferring a requisition to an enterprise system (see at least Col.

5, line 30-Col. 6, line 30). It is well known in the art that transfers may be performed

when a requisition is approved/denied, since approval/ denial of a requisition often

needs to be known to multiple parties, often including a requestor and an approver.

Changes of status of a requisition and notification of such changes are critical. A

requisition system is useless if it is not able to provide such information to duly

authorized personnel. It is well-known in art of electronic commerce to provide approval

and status indicator(s) so that a computer system may identify the status of a requisition

and communicate the status to interested parties. Such indicators may be stored in a

database and accessed via global variables (in C or C++ or Java, or any other type of

machine instruction.

King discloses the use of purchase order numbers that correspond to requisitions

(see at least Col. 2, lines 11-64, Col. 5, line 30-Col. 6, line 30). The use of purchase

orders and purchase order numbers are well-known. Purchase order numbers are often

internal to an enterprise; the purchase order and purchase order number are

necessarily generated by an enterprise, often in an ERP system. The information may

be retrieved from an ERP system, since otherwise the information is useless.

King discloses the use of approval rules to determine the path that a requisition

may take to according to those rules. King shows that various rules may apply, such as

funding, and consequently, specific responsibilities with regard to the ordering process

and completion of a requisition (see references to routing and approval tables, and also

see also at least Fig. 3 and related text). King discloses roles such as buyer/purchasing

agents (see at least 5, line 65-Col. 6, line 30). An entire set of approval relationships

may be stored on in such approval rules. Subsets of approval rules may be defined,

implicitly and explicitly, according to corporate structure, including divisions, business

units, delegation rules, etc.

King discloses that requisitions may be approved or not approved by an approver

and moved to a next approver according to rules (see at least Col. 5, line 30-Col. 6, line

30). King discloses the use of databases to store approval rules (see at least Col. 6,

lines 16-30). King discloses that different approvers may be involved, according to

areas of responsibility, company rules, etc. Various administrators maintain and update

approval databases (see at least Col. 6, lines 15-29).

King *does not* specifically disclose that approvals may be determined at least in

part by purchase amount. Lemble discloses that approvals may be by purchase

amount (Fig. 14, and related text, at least col. 27, lines 43-67). Therefore it would have

been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of electronic commerce at the time the

invention was made to combine King and Lemble to disclose determining approvals by

purchase amount. One of ordinary skill in the art of electronic commerce at the time the

invention was made would have been motivated to combine King and Lemble to

disclose determining approvals by purchase amount for the obvious reason that limits

by amounts are well known and common. One would want to distribute the burden of

approval among various persons in order to avoid bottlenecks in production and to

provide a way of inhibiting preventing fraud by requiring multiple approvals.

King discloses that approval authority may be identified by a company (see at

least Col. 6, lines 16-30). Gardner discloses that an alternate approver may be

delegated to authorize requisitions on the basis of amount or item being requisitioned

(Col. 8, lines 1-64). Neither King nor Gardner specifically disclose who may request

such delegation. However, it is well known in the art that a person may delegate

authority to another person for a wide range of purposes and for specified or non-

specified periods of time. Delegated tasks may include signing timesheets and

approving purchases in his absence. It is common in the art for persons to set up their

emails to generate an "on vacation" message and to direct inquiries to another person in

their absence. Further, Lemble specifically addresses approver controls and restrictions

and access to certain information (see at least Col. 7, lines 1-6, Col. 18, lines 1-6).

Therefore, it would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art to

combine King and Gardner to include receiving a request from a first approver for

delegating the authority of the first approver to a second approver by configuring an

approval path handling means to modify the approval path such that the approval path

includes the second approver in place of the first approver.

One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to modify King and

Gardner (to include receiving a request from a first approver for delegating the authority

of the first approver to a second approver by configuring the approval path handling

means to modify the approval path such that the approval path includes the second

approver in place of the first approver) and include approval paths and delegation of

serial or parallel approval authority for the obvious reason that a company's business

must continue in the absence of one or more approvers in an approval path.

King, Lemble and Gardner do not use the words "predicate," "consequence,"

"serial" or "parallel." The references do not specifically describe moving a requisition to

a next position in an approval path responsive to an approver approving a requisition.

King *does not* specifically disclose notifying an approver when the approver is required

to take action. The references do not specifically disclose how to prevent a first

approver from taking action on a requisition when the requisition request has been

moved from a first approver. However, these features are well-known to those of

ordinary skill in the art, since persons in the requisition/ordering chain of authority would

need the information to make decisions on whether a product is needed immediately or

if a lead time and perhaps additional cost is justified. Other basis of delegating authority

are well-known to one of ordinary skill in the art and may include variables such as

amount of money involved, type of product involved, delivery dates, lead times,

department shipping addresses, where to ship the items ordered, etc.

King discloses interfaces for a user to access the system (see at least Col. 6,

lines 47-58). Gardner discloses the use of the Internet and World Wide Web to access

various portions of a system. They do not use the term *web browser*. A web browser is

software application used to locate and display web pages. The two most popular

browsers are NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR and MICROSOFT INTERNET EXPLORER.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine King

and Gardner and disclose the use of web browsers for users to interface with the various systems. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to combine King and Gardner and disclose the use of web browsers for users to interface with the various systems for the obvious reason that browsers are common, convenient to use and are the most popular way to access the World Wide Web. In particular, both of the mentioned browsers are graphical browsers, which means that they can display graphics as well as text. In addition, most modern browsers can present multimedia information, including sound and video.[2]

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James Zurita whose telephone number is 703-605-4966. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Wynn Coggins can be reached on 703-308-1344. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-305-7687 for regular communications and 703-305-7687 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.

James Zurita
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 3625
June 30, 2003
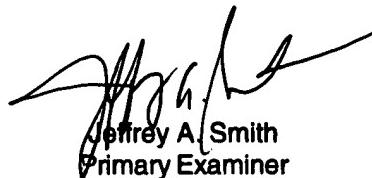
Jeffrey A. Smith
Primary Examiner

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[2] Computer and Internet Dictionary, Random House Webster's.